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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 20 December 2010 (S/2010/661), the President of the Security Council informed me that the members of the Council had agreed to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2013 and requested me to report on the implementation of the revised mandate of UNOWA every six months.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2012. It provides an overview of national, cross-cutting and cross-border developments in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in the areas of preventive diplomacy, early warning and capacity-building to address emerging threats and challenges to regional peace and stability. It also outlines the Office's efforts to enhance synergies with, inter alia, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union and the African Union, in the promotion of peace and stability in the subregion.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

A. Political trends

3. Since the issuance of my previous report, of 30 December 2011 (S/2011/811), several events have occurred that have the potential to reverse the significant gains made in consolidating peace and promoting democracy in West Africa. In the first quarter of 2012, Mali experienced an armed insurgency in the northern part of the country and a coup d'état in Bamako that dislodged the democratically elected Government. This was followed by another coup d'état, in Guinea-Bissau, which ousted the country's democratically elected Government.

4. Consistent with its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, ECOWAS reacted promptly to these unconstitutional changes of government in Guinea-Bissau and Mali. However, concerns remained that other countries in the subregion might also be vulnerable to unconstitutional changes of government, owing primarily to the persistence of the root causes of instability in several countries of the subregion, including weak governance, lack of political inclusiveness and politicized and unregulated security sectors.

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5. The smooth transfer of power that occurred in Senegal following the second round of presidential elections, in March 2012, was a welcome development. Despite the tensions that had marred the pre-electoral context, the election was an encouraging example of democratic maturity in the country. At the same time, elections-related violence continued to be a source of concern during the reporting period. Delayed legislative elections in Guinea and Mauritania fuelled tensions and street protests, while violent outbursts among supporters of rival political parties in Sierra Leone cast doubt over the prospects for peaceful general elections in November 2012.

B. Economic, social and humanitarian trends

6. West Africa continued to experience strong economic growth, despite the weak global economic environment. According to the International Monetary Fund, the subregion will register an average economic growth rate of more than 7.5 per cent in 2012. This is due in part to the discovery and increased extraction of natural resources in such countries as Sierra Leone, Niger and Liberia, where growth rates have been estimated at 35.9, 14 and 8.8 per cent, respectively, in 2012. In Côte d'Ivoire, growth is expected to rebound to about 8 per cent in 2012. These economic trends, spearheaded in recent years by such countries as Ghana, will continue to be dependent on political stability, the impact of the food security crisis in the region and the global economic situation.

7. Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in the broader Sahel region continued to deteriorate as a result of, inter alia, drought and poor harvests. By May 2012, it was estimated that more than 15 million people across the Sahel region were vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, while more than 1 million children under 5 years of age were at risk for severe acute malnutrition. While the response by international donors to the funding requirements of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as outlined in its 2012 strategy paper entitled "Response plan for a food security and nutrition crisis in the Sahel", and to the country-specific consolidated appeals processes of the United Nations has been rapid, the funding gap remains considerable. Given the urgency of needs as we enter the peak of the lean season, it is critical that momentum be sustained and additional funding be made immediately available to respond to emergency priorities. In the medium to long term, it will also be important to support Governments in tackling the root causes of these recurrent crises by providing assistance to build the resilience of their populations.

8. The fighting that erupted in northern Mali in mid-January further aggravated the situation in the Sahel region. By the beginning of June, it was estimated that some 350,000 people had been displaced, including close to 200,000 refugees in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. In Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, most of the refugees settled in areas already deeply affected by the drought. In northern Mali, where the humanitarian presence had already been limited before the conflict as a result of insecurity and the activities of armed groups, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, access to people in need remained a key challenge. Limited distribution of assistance was ongoing. However, humanitarian partners were looking into ways to ensure access and establish a risk management system.

9. The recently ended conflict in Libya continued to have an impact on the region, with the return of more than 212,331 West African nationals to their home countries. Some 130,677 returnees crossed over the border from Libya into Chad and Niger, while another 81,654 returned with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

10. In the Mano River Basin, the humanitarian situation continued to improve. With the gradual improvement of the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire since the post-electoral crisis, Ivorian refugees who sought refuge in neighbouring countries as well as internally displaced persons continued to return to their areas of origin, albeit at a slow pace. Since April 2011, more than 500,000 internally displaced persons have returned home and most of the camps have been closed, although approximately 90,000 people remain displaced, most of whom reside in host communities. Meanwhile, the number of refugees amounts to approximately 95,000; 70 per cent of them remain in Liberia and, for the most part, are not expected to return to Côte d'Ivoire, owing to fear of recrimination and retaliation.

C. Security trends, including maritime security, drug trafficking and organized crime

11. The threats of transnational organized crime and terrorism continued to undermine governance and security in West Africa. These threats were further intensified following the military coups d'état in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. In the case of Mali, criminal and terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, have formed opportunistic alliances with insurgents and Islamic fundamentalists in order to forcibly take control of most of the northern part of the country. The area is increasingly becoming a safe haven from which criminal and terrorist organizations could expand their operations throughout the subregion and beyond. In addition, the countries in the Sahel region have expressed concern that the proliferation of weapons originating from Libyan arsenals have enabled these organizations to strengthen their operational capacities.

12. The subregion continued to serve as a transit point for international criminal networks trafficking cocaine and heroin to European consumer markets. Some significant seizures were made in the region during the reporting period, including a seizure of 19.2 kg in Abidjan on 30 May. The rising level of local consumption of cocaine, crack cocaine and heroin in the subregion is a new phenomenon that West African countries are not sufficiently equipped to address. There has also been an increase in the proliferation of fake or counterfeit medicine in several countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Togo.

13. Since my previous report, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has continued to threaten the security and the economic activities of affected countries. According to the International Maritime Organization, 29 attempted or committed incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea have been reported in West African waters since 1 January 2012.

14. As demonstrated by the attack perpetrated against peacekeepers of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) on 8 June, the post-electoral conflict in Côte d'Ivoire continued to have a negative impact on the security situation along the country's border with Liberia. Residual concerns connected to the continued illicit movement of weapons and armed groups, as well as cross-border attacks,

among the countries of the Mano River Union remain. The ongoing sectarian violence perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria and its reported links with other terrorist groups active in northern Mali have also contributed to instability in the subregion.

D. Trends relating to human rights and gender issues

15. The human rights situation in West African countries affected by political instability and insecurity, such as Mali and Guinea-Bissau, and in those affected by the growing threat of terrorism, such as Nigeria, remains a source of concern. In northern Mali, human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial execution, rape, the recruitment and use of child soldiers and the looting of schools, hospitals and aid agencies, have been allegedly perpetrated by the various armed groups in control of this area. In addition, the 22 March coup d'état led to human rights violations in Bamako, including several cases of arbitrary arrest and detention and security incidents targeting populations originating from northern Mali. The emergence of new armed rebel groups in northern Mali, coupled with their lack of effective command structures and accountability mechanisms, has heightened the risk of violence and abuse, particularly for women. The human rights situation is also precarious for Malian refugees in neighbouring countries who are coexisting with host communities affected by the food and nutrition crisis.

16. Meanwhile, there have also been some positive developments with respect to the fight against impunity. On 22 February, the International Criminal Court decided to expand the authorization for investigations in Côte d'Ivoire into alleged crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court to cover events from 19 September 2002 onwards. On 26 April, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found former Liberian President Charles Taylor guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and on 30 May he was sentenced to 50 years of imprisonment. In Guinea, there have been encouraging signs towards the establishment of a transitional justice mechanism to promote national reconciliation, while in Togo the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission completed its work and submitted its reports to the relevant authorities.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. United Nations good offices and special assignments for conflict and crisis prevention

17. During the reporting period, my Special Representative for West Africa focused his good offices on ensuring a return to civilian rule and constitutional order in Mali and in Guinea-Bissau, in coordination with my Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau; managing election-related tensions; and assisting in the consolidation of democratic processes and institutions, particularly in Guinea, Senegal and Togo.

Guinea

18. The political situation in Guinea remained polarized, owing to the continued lack of consensus between the Government and the opposition regarding the modalities for the organization of the legislative elections. The report of the inclusive political dialogue framework, which was published on 23 February, noted

strong divergences among stakeholders, especially with respect to the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the revision of the voter list. In particular, the Government has posited that any changes in the composition of the Commission should be the prerogative of a newly elected Parliament, while the opposition has stated that restructuring the Commission is justified because of the perceived bias and weak credibility of its Chair.

19. On 2 March, the Independent National Electoral Commission proposed the holding of the legislative elections on 8 July 2012. The announcement prompted negative reactions on the part of the opposition, which claimed that the Commission had not consulted with political actors prior to making the announcement. In March, the opposition staged a series of demonstrations to protest the alleged lack of transparency in the electoral process, which had occasionally resulted in incidents of violence. On 29 March, the ruling Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée (RPG) merged with 40 smaller political parties of the ruling coalition in order to establish the "RPG-Arc-en-ciel" and to compete with a single list of candidates in the upcoming legislative elections.

20. On 7 March, the Independent National Electoral Commission submitted a formal request for United Nations assistance for the legislative election. In response, a United Nations advisory and assessment mission was deployed to Guinea from 23 April to 5 May. The mission found that there was a need to continue to facilitate political dialogue with a view to achieving greater consensus regarding key aspects of the electoral preparations. Meanwhile, my Special Representative separately discussed the alleged lack of transparency in the electoral process, the revision of the voter list and the reform of the Commission with the opposition leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo and the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, on 25 and 26 April, respectively. My Special Representative encouraged the authorities to ensure transparency and adequate communication with all national stakeholders in preparing for the elections, as well as to consider the demands of the opposition.

21. On 27 April, President Condé announced the indefinite postponement of the date of the elections, owing to technical issues and the need to address all prerequisites for the electoral process. On 2 May, the Independent National Electoral Commission launched the revision of the voter register, amid a boycott by the opposition. On 7 May, despite the President's announcement, which was aimed in part at appeasing the opposition's grievances, leaders of the opposition coalition comprising the Collectif des partis politiques pour la finalization de la transition and the Alliance pour la démocratie et le progrès announced their plan to hold a national campaign of demonstrations. On 10 May, security forces forcibly dispersed an opposition rally in Conakry, causing several injuries and prompting the Government to temporarily ban all demonstrations. At President Condé's request, the revision of the voter list was suspended on 14 May to raise the population's awareness regarding the modalities of the voter registration.

22. On 16 and 17 May, my Special Representative encouraged President Condé and Mr. Diallo to maintain an open dialogue with a view to preserving their legitimacy and in the interest of the holding of consensual elections. While both parties confirmed their commitment to the holding of transparent and credible elections, Mr. Diallo stressed the need to replace the Chair of the Commission, and President Condé indicated that he would consider convening a meeting with the political leaders to discuss ways to increase the transparency of the elections.

Sahel and Mali

23. As part of his efforts to support the rapid implementation of the recommendations made by the inter-agency assessment mission that I had dispatched to the Sahel in December 2011, my Special Representative travelled to Mali on 9 and 10 February with the Director of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to assess the humanitarian impact of the rebellion in northern Mali and to engage senior Malian officials, including former President Amadou Toumani Touré. He also led the United Nations delegation to the ministerial meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council held in Bamako on 20 March, at which several important decisions were taken to stabilize the situation in northern Mali and in the Sahel region, including through the establishment of the African Union-United Nations Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali.

24. The instability resulting from the outbreak of the armed rebellion in northern Mali early in January 2012 and the subsequent military coup d'état against former President Touré on 22 March 2012 were the primary focuses of the efforts of ECOWAS and the activities of UNOWA during the reporting period. The coup d'état, which was carried out by a military junta calling itself the Comité national de redressement de la démocratie et de la restauration de l'état (CNRDRE), prompted an immediate, firm and principled reaction on the part of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations, which unanimously demanded the immediate restoration of constitutional order in the country.

25. On 29 March, ECOWAS leaders, in the course of an emergency session, decided to suspend Mali's membership in the Community and to impose sanctions against the military junta should it fail to restore constitutional order by 2 April. In addition, the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, was appointed as ECOWAS mediator for the crisis in Mali and the ECOWAS Commission was requested to place the ECOWAS Standby Force on alert.

26. On 2 April, following the failure by CNRDRE to comply with the demand of ECOWAS for the restoration of constitutional order, the Community decided to enforce the sanctions regime agreed upon on 29 March and urged the junta to fully relinquish power to legitimate authorities in conformity with the 1992 Constitution.

27. Following the mediation efforts of ECOWAS, CNRDRE agreed to sign a framework agreement on 6 April, which led to the resignation of former President Touré and the designation of the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dioncounda Traoré, as interim President for a 40-day period in accordance with the Constitution. The framework agreement also provided for the formation of a transitional Government, headed by an interim Prime Minister responsible for organizing elections and resolving the security and humanitarian crises in the northern part of the country.

28. The signing of the 6 April framework agreement prompted the immediate lifting of ECOWAS sanctions. On 12 April, Mr. Traoré was sworn in as interim President; on 17 April, Cheick Modibo Diarra was designated Prime Minister; and on 25 April, a new Cabinet was formed.

29. Despite these positive developments towards the restoration of constitutional order, the framework agreement did not fully address the issue of the role of CNRDRE during the transition and the status of the interim authorities beyond the expiration of the 40-day transitional period. In the meantime, the military junta

continued to interfere in the transition process, arbitrarily arresting several prominent Malians on a few occasions.

30. Against this background, on 26 April the Heads of State of ECOWAS decided to extend the duration of the transitional period and the term of the transitional authorities by 12 months, during which presidential elections were expected to be organized. They also called on all stakeholders to cooperate with the ECOWAS mediator to reach agreement on a road map for the transition and the restoration of national unity and the territorial integrity of the country. In addition, ECOWAS called on the President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, and neighbouring countries to support the ECOWAS mediator in his efforts to restore Mali's territorial integrity and instructed the ECOWAS Commission to start preparing, with immediate effect, the deployment of the ECOWAS Standby Force.

31. Following the rejection by CNRDRE of the 26 April ECOWAS decisions, as well as clashes in Bamako among security forces on 30 April, the ECOWAS Heads of State reconvened at an extraordinary summit held in Dakar on 3 May. At the summit, the ECOWAS Commission was requested to prepare for the deployment, of the ECOWAS Standby Force, which should be carried out only upon the formal request of the Malian authorities, and to define, in consultation with the Malian authorities the modalities of military cooperation between the ECOWAS Standby Force and the Malian army. In this connection, on 31 May the ECOWAS Commission officially requested United Nations assistance to support ECOWAS planning efforts to deploy the Standby Force.

32. In the light of the continued opposition of CNRDRE to the ECOWAS decisions, an extraordinary meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council was held at the ministerial level in Abidjan on 19 May. The Council demanded that CNRDRE comply with all ECOWAS decisions and respect the 12-month transitional process and transitional authorities. However, shortly after the Council meeting, Mali's President Traoré was attacked by pro-junta protesters in his office on 21 May, a development indicating the continued fragility of the transition process. President Traoré is currently undergoing medical treatment in France.

33. Since the inception of the crisis, my Special Representative has remained actively engaged in promoting a return to constitutional order in Mali and in providing support for ECOWAS mediation efforts. In this context, my Special Representative participated in two joint ECOWAS-United Nations-African Union missions to Mali, on 23 March and 20 May, and travelled to Bamako twice in April in support of ECOWAS efforts. Throughout these consultations, he conveyed the United Nations position regarding the need for strict adherence to democratic principles and an effective return to constitutional order, in accordance with the 1992 Malian Constitution and the 6 April framework agreement. He repeatedly impressed upon CNRDRE the need to fully cooperate with the ECOWAS mediation, to abide by constitutional rule and to respect civilian institutions.

34. Throughout this period, my Special Representative maintained regular contacts with the ECOWAS mediation, including with regard to the need to uphold a principled approach with CNRDRE in line with the ECOWAS position of zero tolerance for unconstitutional seizures of power.

35. As agreed at the 20 March ministerial meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, my Special Representative co-chaired, with the Chairperson of the

African Union Commission, Jean Ping, the inaugural meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali, held in Abidjan on 7 June. The participants included the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, representing the Chairs of ECOWAS and the African Union, respectively. The meeting provided an opportunity to jointly review steps aimed at ensuring the consolidation of the transitional institutions.

36. My Special Representative also held consultations on the situation in Mali with the Heads of relevant States in the region, including the President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and the President of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou (see below).

Mauritania

37. My Special Representative travelled to Mauritania from 2 to 3 June to meet with national stakeholders in order to discuss the political polarization resulting from, inter alia, the continued absence of an electoral timetable for the legislative and municipal elections, initially planned for October 2011. He met with President Ould Abdel Aziz; the Speaker of the National Assembly, Messaoud Ould Boulkheir; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hamadi Ould Hamadi; and leaders of the opposition. My Special Representative welcomed the progress achieved so far by the Government and encouraged his interlocutors to promote inclusive dialogue towards building democracy and reaching a consensual approach to the holding of the elections.

Niger

38. Building on his previous visits carried out as part of his efforts to support the development of a comprehensive strategy for the Sahel, my Special Representative undertook a mission to Niger on 17 and 18 May 2012, jointly with the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. On that occasion, he met with President Issoufou and Prime Minister Brigi Rafini, who reaffirmed their concerns about the situation in Mali and its spillover effect on their country. Niger is currently hosting more than 50,000 refugees and 600 Malian soldiers. National funds initially earmarked for development had to be redeployed in order to address security concerns.

Senegal

39. In Senegal, the period leading to the holding of the February 2012 presidential elections was marred by tensions created as a result of the opposition to the decision of former President Abdoulaye Wade to seek a third term in office. The decision taken by the Constitutional Council on 29 January to validate Mr. Wade's candidature triggered large-scale demonstrations, resulting in at least nine deaths and several injuries. This prompted civil society organizations and religious leaders in the country, as well as representatives of the international community, to repeatedly call on all political actors to exercise restraint and to promote peaceful, free and fair elections.

40. On 26 February, the first round of the presidential elections took place peacefully. According to the official results, President Wade and former Prime Minister Macky Sall garnered 34.81 per cent and 26.58 per cent of the vote, respectively. The 25 March presidential run-off also took place in a peaceful and

credible manner, as assessed by national and international observers. Within a few hours after the closing of the polling stations, President Wade gracefully conceded his defeat by calling Mr. Sall to congratulate him on his victory at the polls. On 27 March, the National Vote Tabulation Committee released the provisional results, declaring Mr. Sall the winner with 65.8 per cent of the vote, against 34.2 per cent for the outgoing President. These results were validated by the Constitutional Council on 30 March, and President Sall was sworn in on 2 April.

41. In order to defuse tensions during the lead-up to the elections, my Special Representative met on 25 January with President Wade and the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Madické Niang, to emphasize the need to ensure the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections. On 3 February, following clashes between demonstrators and security forces, my Special Representative met separately with the then-Minister of Justice, Cheikh Tidiane Sy; the main presidential candidates, including President Sall, Moustapha Niasse and Ibrahima Fall; and other prominent political personalities, such as Abdoulaye Bathily, to convey the international community's concerns about the risk of the derailment of the electoral process. In all these instances, he encouraged his interlocutors to call on their respective supporters to exercise restraint and to promote a peaceful electoral process. My Special Representative also maintained regular contact with representatives of ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union and other key international stakeholders, including former President Olusegun Obasanjo, in his capacity as the joint special envoy of the African Union and ECOWAS.

Togo

42. During the reporting period, efforts were made by the Government and the opposition in Togo to address the polarized political environment in the lead-up to the October 2012 parliamentary and local elections through the Permanent Framework for Dialogue and Consultation, initiated in September 2011. However, several opposition parties, including the Alliance nationale pour le changement (ANC) and the Comité d'action pour le renouveau (CAR), decided not to participate in the dialogue process. On 20 February, the Government and the Rassemblement du peuple togolais (RPT) launched parallel talks with ANC and CAR. However, the initiative stalled, as the parties failed to agree on an agenda for the discussions.

43. It was against this background that my Special Representative undertook a mission to Lomé from 22 to 24 January to promote inclusiveness in the political dialogue process aimed at creating the conditions necessary for the conduct of peaceful, free and fair parliamentary and local elections.

44. During his visit, my Special Representative also encouraged the Togolese authorities to rapidly implement the recommendations of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, which had submitted its report to the President on 4 April, and to demonstrate their commitment to the process. The report identified and analysed the nature, causes, extent, perpetrators and victims of political violence in the country from the first legislative elections in Togo, held in 1958, to the 2005 presidential elections. The report recommended several follow-up actions, including reparations for victims, as well as a series of institutional, political and security sector reforms. Following the publication of the report, the President apologized to the victims on behalf of the Government and on his own behalf, and pledged to implement the recommendations of the Commission. On the margins of

the summit of the West African Economic and Monetary Union held in Lomé on 6 June, my Special Representative met with the Togolese Minister of the Interior and expressed the readiness of the United Nations to assist in promoting an environment conducive to peaceful elections.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

45. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, chaired by my Special Representative, faced a number of security-related impediments to completing the implementation of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002. Owing to security restrictions resulting from the increased number of terrorist incidents perpetrated by the Boko Haram terrorist group in north-eastern Nigeria, it was not possible to carry out demarcation activities along the northern part of the Cameroon-Nigeria land boundary. However, a field assessment was conducted by Cameroon and Nigeria along the southern part of the boundary. The mission, carried out from 2 May to 2 June, covered approximately 90 km. To date of the estimated 1,950 km of boundary line, some 1,793 km has been formally agreed upon by the parties.

46. Regarding the implementation of the Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006, the fourteenth mission to observe the withdrawal and transfer of authority in the Bakassi Peninsula, which was conducted from 16 to 19 March, noted further improvements in the Bakassi "zone", including the building of two medical facilities by the Government of Cameroon. Moreover, a road connecting three subdivisions of Bakassi had recently been rehabilitated, facilitating commercial activities as well as the establishment of permanent residences for civil servants in the area. Despite these positive developments, the local population continued to object to the restrictions imposed on fishing activities and to the deterioration of the security situation in the "zone" as a result of criminal activities, including acts of piracy.

47. From 29 to 30 March, the follow-up committee tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Greentree Agreement held its twelfth meeting in Geneva, under the chairmanship of my Special Representative. The meeting considered the report on the fourteenth visit of the observers to the local communities of Kombo-Abedimo, Jabane and Idabato in the Bakassi "zone", carried out from 16 to 19 March 2012, and noted that the situation in the "zone" remained calm and stable. It also reviewed security-related cooperation between the parties. Cameroon and Nigeria reaffirmed their willingness to address law-enforcement-related issues raised by the local population and welcomed the signing on 26 February of a cross-border security cooperation agreement by the Deputy Prime Minister of Cameroon, Amadou Ali, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Olugbenga Ashiru.

48. In the context of strengthening confidence-building measures along the Nigeria-Cameroon border, the Lake Chad Basin Commission met at the ministerial level in N'Djamena on 25 April to discuss an investment plan for the revitalization of the Basin area. It was followed on 30 April by the fourteenth summit of Heads of State and Government of the Commission, who agreed to extend the mandate of a joint task force in order to address general security issues involving the common border areas, including the challenges posed by Boko Haram.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security, including piracy

Security sector reform

49. During the reporting period, UNOWA continued to provide support for security sector reform initiatives in the subregion, particularly in Guinea. Following a request by President Condé for increased United Nations support, a senior security sector reform adviser to the Guinean Government was appointed on 4 January. The adviser, supported by a security sector reform advisory team, will provide strategic and political support for the security sector reform process and enhance the coordination of international efforts with national stakeholders. The team is financed by the Peacebuilding Fund.

50. The results of the biometric census of the armed forces, carried out with United Nations support, were released on 30 March. The results indicated a total of 26,319 registered individuals, among whom 3,928 military personnel with at least 35 years of service were due to retire, as at 1 January 2012. The Peacebuilding Fund supported a separation allowance for all retirees in the amount of $4.2 million. An inter-agency mission led by the Peacebuilding Support Office, with the participation of UNOWA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, was deployed to Guinea from 12 to 16 March. The mission positively assessed the progress achieved in the implementation of the military retirement project.

51. On 11 April, the national technical monitoring commission, as part of the national steering committee on security sector reform, presented the budget for the national and sectoral action plan to the relevant authorities in charge of the security sector. These documents will contribute to a concrete national programme, which will be part of the overall national security sector reform strategy. The United Nations system, through the senior security sector reform adviser, will support the Guinean authorities in implementing these steps.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

52. During the reporting period, UNOWA continued its efforts to support West African initiatives aimed at combating drug trafficking and to mobilize international support for the fight against transnational organized crime. Several activities were undertaken as part of a concerted effort by UNOWA, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to implement the West Africa Coast Initiative, in support of the ECOWAS regional action plan. A decision was taken to expand the Initiative to Guinea following an inter-agency assessment mission deployed to Conakry from 2 to 6 April and in line with the recommendations of the High-level Policy Committee meeting held on 20 June 2011. On 16 May, during his meeting with my Special Representative, President Condé expressed his firm commitment to fighting transnational organized crime, implementing the West Africa Coast Initiative programme and establishing a transnational crime unit in Guinea.

53. An inter-agency mission was also deployed to Côte d'Ivoire from 28 May to 1 June to conduct an assessment with a view to resuming West Africa Coast Initiative activities in the country, which had been suspended during the post-

electoral crisis. The first meetings of the Project Operational Committee, the coordination body for the Initiative at the national level, also took place in May and June, in Sierra Leone and Liberia, respectively. In Sierra Leone, the transnational organized crime unit continued to make progress in international investigations, and in Guinea-Bissau the establishment of the transnational crime unit continued despite the 12 April coup d'état.

54. UNOWA also continued to advocate greater political and operational commitment on the part of international partners to the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative. To this end, my Special Representative met on 13 February with the Secretary-General of INTERPOL, Ronald K. Noble, in Lyon, France. The meeting focused on ways to reinforce the cooperation between UNOWA and INTERPOL on cross-border issues, such as illicit drug trafficking, the proliferation of weapons in West Africa and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. My Special Representative also continued his advocacy efforts to mobilize support on the part of the European Union for the implementation of the 2008-2011 regional action plan of ECOWAS against drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse, and discussed with the Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, President Alassane Ouattara, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission ways to revitalize the regional action plan.

Counter-terrorism

55. In the context of mounting terrorist activities in West Africa, UNOWA strengthened its efforts to facilitate the work of United Nations specialized counter-terrorism bodies at both the subregional and national levels. Following the joint engagement of UNOWA and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate with ECOWAS, progress was achieved in the design of an ECOWAS counter-terrorism strategy by experts of ECOWAS member States. The draft strategy is to be submitted to the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council for final adoption by Heads of State.

56. As a follow-up to the recommendations of the December 2011 inter-agency assessment mission to the Sahel, UNOWA participated in the visit by the Counter-Terrorism Committee to Niger from 7 to 9 May, together with the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism, IOM and INTERPOL.

Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

57. In line with the report of the United Nations assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, of 18 January 2012 (see S/2012/45), and in the context of the implementation of Security Council resolution 2039 (2012), my Special Representative participated in a high-level consultative meeting held in Libreville on 31 May that brought together the chief executives of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea. The participants agreed to establish a steering committee, composed of the chief executives of ECCAS, ECOWAS, the Commission, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), UNOWA and the African Union, which would be tasked with developing a draft anti-piracy strategy and an action plan to be endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the region. It was also tasked with organizing a regional summit to be held before the end of 2012. The steering committee's first priority will be to convene a meeting of experts from the

Gulf of Guinea countries as well as interested partners to formulate the first draft of the regional strategy.

Media, peace and security

58. From 14 to 15 June, UNOWA organized, in partnership with ECOWAS and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), a regional forum on "Media, peace and security in West Africa", held in Abidjan. The forum brought together Government representatives, representatives of regional and international organizations, journalists and representatives of media associations, who articulated a set of recommendations on the role of the media in peace and security in the subregion, with a view to fostering mutual capacity-building and collaboration among various stakeholders and to increasing the participation of media in promoting peace and stability in the subregion. The forum built on the outcomes of the Regional Conference on Elections and Stability in West Africa, held in Praia in May 2011, and the Regional Conference on Impunity, Justice and Human Rights in West Africa, held in Bamako in December 2011, both of which were co-organized by UNOWA, in collaboration with ECOWAS, the African Union and OIF.

C. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender

59. During the reporting period, UNOWA continued to promote initiatives for the protection of human rights and gender mainstreaming. On 8 March, within the framework of the regional action plan on the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), UNOWA, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and three civil society organizations — the Association of Senegalese Women Jurists, the Gorée Institute and the AGORA Group — organized a workshop on "Women, peace and stability" in Dakar. Participants assessed the trends in acts of violence against women perpetrated in the context of armed conflicts and determined ways to enhance the role of women in peace efforts.

60. From 26 to 28 March, UNOWA, together with the Mano River Union secretariat, UNOCI and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, organized a high-level seminar with civil society experts on peace and stability in the Mano River Union, held in Abidjan. The participants in the seminar adopted a final declaration entitled "The MRU civil society agenda", which grants to civil society organizations ownership of the regional action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the 2011 Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa and the 2011 Bamako Declaration and Strategic Framework on Impunity, Justice and Human Rights. The Mano River Union civil society agenda also contains a plan for activities to be jointly undertaken by civil society organizations in these areas.

D. Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

61. My Special Representative convened a number of meetings with United Nations agencies to review the crisis in the Sahel and Mali, including on 8 and 29 February, when my Special Representative chaired the 10th meeting of Dakar-based regional directors and representatives of United Nations agencies. Participants reviewed possible options for harmonizing their activities to assist ECOWAS and other regional organizations in addressing cross-border challenges, including piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, drug trafficking and the situation in the Sahel. With regard to the Sahel, participants agreed to strengthen cooperation within the United Nations system to address the fragile situation in Mali and to mobilize resources in order to effectively respond to the humanitarian emergency, in particular with respect to the food crisis. As a result, a Dakar-based regional inter-agency task force was established to prepare an action plan on resilience-building in the Sahel, in support of the countries of the subregion.

62. On 2 May, my Special Representative convened a meeting in Dakar of the heads of United Nations peace missions in West Africa to review the situation in the subregion, with a special focus on Mali and Guinea-Bissau, as well as on cross-border challenges to peace and stability in the subregion. The heads of mission welcomed and encouraged the Office's initiative to revitalize its strategic partnership with ECOWAS and the Mano River Union and identified joint actions to reinforce their collaboration, including through the development of a regional anti-piracy strategy for the States of the Gulf of Guinea and the operationalization of the ECOWAS regional action plan to fight drug trafficking. The participants also agreed to increase their collaboration so as to develop a subregional security strategy to address the threats of mercenaries and the illicit cross-border movement of weapons and their impact on population movements, in particular in the context of the Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia border. The strategy will build on and harmonize existing initiatives undertaken by UNOCI, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the Mano River Union and other United Nations entities. It will be focused primarily on the Mano River Basin and will be developed through the existing peace and security architecture of the Union, prior to being submitted for the consideration of ECOWAS.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

63. During the reporting period, UNOWA undertook to broaden the scope of its partnership with ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union and OIF. In addition to the Office's regular interactions with regional and subregional partners, my Special Representative engaged with the new leadership of the ECOWAS Authority and Commission in order to reach agreement on priorities for joint actions. At a meeting held on 21 March in Accra, my Special Representative and the President of the ECOWAS Commission agreed to further strengthen the UNOWA-ECOWAS partnership and to place specific priority on addressing cross-border and cross-cutting challenges, including maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, drug trafficking and organized crime, and instability in the Sahel, in line with the priorities identified at the fortieth summit of ECOWAS.

64. My Special Representative also engaged the Mano River Union secretariat on the development of a subregional security strategy pursuant to my request and to Security Council resolution 2000 (2011), aimed at addressing the threats of mercenaries and the cross-border movement of weapons and their impact on population movement, in particular in the context of the Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia border. On 3 and 4 April, my Special Representative travelled to Freetown to hold consultations with the Secretary-General of the Mano River Union secretariat, Saran Daraba Kaba. On this occasion, several areas of potential United Nations assistance to the Union were identified, including: (a) mediation; (b) the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); (c) security sector reform; and (d) public information.

IV. Observations and recommendations

65. The reporting period was marked by the unconstitutional changes of power in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, the conflict in northern Mali and the overall deteriorating situation in the Sahel. West Africa continued to face several cross-cutting and cross-border challenges that could, if left unaddressed, further undermine regional stability and, ultimately, reverse the peace dividends achieved over the past few years. In this context, the renewed commitment and determination demonstrated by the new ECOWAS leadership and regional leaders are noteworthy. UNOWA will continue to work closely with its partners, including those in the United Nations system, to support subregional initiatives aimed at countering these threats and challenges.

66. I remain deeply concerned about the situation in Mali, the repercussions of which extend far beyond the country's borders and the immediate subregion. Stabilizing Mali and the Sahel region as a whole will constitute a major priority in the months ahead, and UNOWA will continue to support the development of a common strategy on the Sahel region consistent with the conclusions of the African Union-United Nations meeting of experts held in Addis Ababa on 14 and 15 March. In that context, I welcome the decisions reached during the 7 June inaugural meeting of the African Union/United Nations Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali. We must ensure a full and lasting return to constitutional order and the implementation of a road map for the 12-month transitional period agreed to by ECOWAS and the transitional authorities.

67. I also reiterate my call to the military in Mali to strictly refrain from any actions that could undermine the transition. I encourage the transitional authorities to rapidly present a road map and time frame for the transition, including provisions related to the organization of elections and the restoration of State authority in the north, which is in the grip of criminal and extremist groups, as well as the restructuring and reorganization of the armed forces, as recommended by the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali. I call on Member States to lend their full support to the ongoing efforts of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations to help the Government and the people of Mali to chart their own path, through dialogue, towards a peaceful and lasting resolution of the current crisis.

68. With regard to Guinea, I commend the efforts of the political actors to foster dialogue, to address the ongoing political tensions and to consolidate peace in that

country. The timely holding of free, fair and peaceful legislative elections constitutes a key priority in reinforcing the democratization process and bringing the transition to an end. I appeal to the ruling and opposition parties to exercise flexibility and goodwill in order to arrive at an early consensus on modalities for the holding of the elections and for building public confidence in the electoral mechanisms and institutions.

69. I also encourage all stakeholders to remain engaged in the national reconciliation process initiated by the Guinean Government and to spare no efforts to bring it to a successful conclusion. The United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Government in all these endeavours. The success of the security sector reform process will also be critical to Guinea's stability. In this regard, the deployment of the senior security sector reform adviser and his team will enable the United Nations to respond to the country's call for strategic advice and the improved coordination of international activities and programmes related to security sector reform.

70. I welcome the successful, peaceful and consensual conclusion of the electoral processes in Senegal despite the tensions prevailing during the pre-electoral period. I commend the positive efforts of the political leadership in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to address the divergences that emerged between the Government and the opposition parties in the wake of their respective electoral processes. I call on all relevant political actors in the region to create conditions conducive to the conduct of peaceful and credible elections, in accordance with existing regional and international instruments and the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa.

71. Transnational organized crime, including illicit drugs and arms trafficking, remains a serious threat to regional stability, in particular in the context of the growing insecurity in the Sahel. I urge the countries of the subregion to swiftly implement existing instruments and tools to address this growing source of instability. In particular, I encourage ECOWAS member States to renew and extend the regional action plan on organized crime and illicit drug trafficking and to establish a secretariat on drugs and crime within the ECOWAS Commission.

72. As governance of the security sector is at the core of the consolidation of State institutions in West Africa, I encourage ECOWAS, with the support of UNOWA, to finalize and adopt the subregional political framework and plan of action on security sector governance and reform, which has been under discussion since 2009.

73. The resolve displayed by the subregion to address the threat of maritime piracy is encouraging. This determination was exemplified by the road map adopted on 31 May by the chief executives of ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea, outlining the way forward for the formulation and adoption of a regional anti-piracy strategy and the convening of a summit of regional States by the end of 2012, in close consultation with the African Union and with the support of UNOWA and UNOCA. I encourage all relevant stakeholders to sustain this momentum, and I call upon the international community to provide the assistance and resources necessary for the strengthening of regional capacities to address the scourge of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea.

74. In the light of the possible links among the various terrorist groups active in West Africa, I encourage ECOWAS to finalize and adopt the subregional counter-

terrorism framework. In the context of the Office's cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, I call on the international community to fully support countries in the subregion in their efforts to effectively respond to the threat of terrorism.

75. I note the progress achieved by the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission during the reporting period and the need to take all appropriate security restrictions into account while carrying out demarcation work along the Cameroon-Nigeria land boundary. I am pleased that Cameroon and Nigeria have committed to the implementation of the 28 February cross-border security cooperation agreement signed by the two parties, and also encourage them to respect the schedule of meetings that they have set in order to complete the demarcation of the boundary.

76. In conclusion, I would like once again to express my appreciation to the Governments of West African States, ECOWAS, the African Union and the Mano River Union for their continued cooperation. I also extend my gratitude to the United Nations entities in West Africa, civil society organizations and other partners for their continued collaboration with UNOWA in the implementation of its mandate. I wish to thank my Special Representative, especially during this particularly challenging period, as well as the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, for their valuable contributions to peace and stability in the subregion.